



# Gen. Milley feared Trump might launch nuclear attack, made secret calls to China, new book says



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In the aftermath of the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Mark Milley — then former President Donald Trump's top military adviser — took precautions to limit Trump's ability to launch a military strike or deploy nuclear weapons, according to a new book by Bob Woodward and Robert Costa of The Washington Post.

In "Peril," Woodward and Costa write that [Milley was afraid Trump had constructed "his own alternate reality about endless election conspiracies"](#) and was worried the former president could "go rogue," CNN reported.




Milley told senior staff that "You never know what a president's trigger point is," according to CNN.

In an rare move, the outlet reported, Milley called a secret meeting of senior military officials at the Pentagon on Jan. 8 to review the process for military action — including launching

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According to CNN, he told the officials "No matter what you are told, you do the procedure. You do the process. And I'm part of that procedure." Milley then looked each officer in the eye and asked them to verbally confirm they understood his instructions.

Milley's actions were prompted by a [phone call with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., earlier that day](#). According to The Washington Post, Pelosi demanded to know "What precautions are available to prevent an unstable president from initiating military hostilities or from accessing the launch codes and ordering a nuclear strike?"

"He's crazy. You know he's crazy. ... He's crazy and what he did yesterday is further evidence of his craziness," she said, according to The Post. Milley replied, "I agree with you on everything."

Milley's decision to place himself between Trump and sanctioned military actions mirrored those of James R. Schlesinger, secretary of defense under President Richard Nixon. In August 1974, Schlesinger instructed military officials to alert him and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs before carrying out orders from Nixon, who was facing impeachment at the time, The Post reported.



Milley also reassured Chinese Gen. Li Zuocheng of the People's Liberation Army that [the U.S. had no intention of launching a strike against China](#), according to the paper. It was one of two secret phone calls shared with Li on the issue.

The first took place on Oct. 30, 2020, after Milley reviewed intelligence suggesting China believed the U.S. was preparing for an attack due to military exercises in the South China Sea and Trump's antagonism toward the country, according to The Post. But Milley told Li he would be warned of an impending attack.

"General Li, you and I have known each other for now five years," he said, according to the paper. "If we're going to attack, I'm going to call you ahead of time. It's not going to be a surprise."

But the events of Jan. 6 renewed Li's concerns. On Jan. 8, Milley once again assured the Chinese general. "We are 100

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admiral overseeing the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command to recommend postponing military exercises, to which he complied.

**In a statement Tuesday, Trump responded to the book's revelations by calling Milley a "failed leader who engineered the worst withdrawal from a country ... in U.S. history..."**

If the story is true, he said, "then I assume (Milley) would be tried for TREASON in that he would have been dealing with his Chinese counterpart behind the President's back and telling China that he would be giving them notification 'of an attack.' Can't do that!"

"Peril" is a [recount of Trump's final days in office based on more than 200 interviews](#) with eyewitness accounts.

Woodward and Costa also delve into the first days of the Biden presidency.

The book is supplemented with classified material, from secret orders to call transcripts, diaries, emails, meeting notes and personal government records. It is scheduled for release on Sept. 21.

*Reach out to Chelsey Cox on Twitter at @therealco.*

*This article originally appeared on USA TODAY: [Gen Milley secretly called China amid fear Trump could start nuclear war](#)*

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